

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE PURCHASES WILDLIFE-RICH
BLUE RIDGE RANCH**

The nonprofit's 29th land acquisition features prime elk habitat

American Prairie Reserve is pleased to announce the purchase of the Blue Ridge ranch, located approximately 45 miles southeast from Malta in southern Phillips County, Montana. The 14,122-acre property is comprised of 9,695 deeded acres and 4,427 leased acres, and brings American Prairie Reserve's total deeded and leased property to more than 419,000 acres.

The Blue Ridge property is nestled in the Larb Hills and shares a five-mile border with the Reserve's Burnt Lodge unit. The acquisition expands American Prairie Reserve's connectivity to migratory pathways for wildlife from neighboring protected areas such as the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. It is part of APR's mission to grow contiguous habitat area, which is essential to restoring ecosystem biodiversity on the prairie.

Reserve Superintendent Damien Austin said the property brings together a diverse landscape including sagebrush steppe, rocky buttes and breaks, and ponderosa pine covered hills, offering crucial wildlife habitat for many plant and animal species.

"The topography and habitat of Blue Ridge are extremely important to the regional elk population," said Austin. "We feel very fortunate to be able to add such a wildlife-rich area to the Reserve."

Blue Ridge is known for its wildlife, including a resident elk herd, bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, and prairie dogs. Given the robust populations of wildlife, American Prairie Reserve CEO Alison Fox said her team is prepared for increased interest from the public in the area.

"We are very excited to add Blue Ridge to the Reserve and we anticipate recreationists will be as well," said Fox. "As we've done with past land purchases, we need to first take time to familiarize ourselves with the property prior to welcoming the public. The safety of our visitors is a primary concern of the organization."

AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE

Because Blue Ridge is new to American Prairie Reserve, a necessary assessment of the property is being conducted. During this assessment period, the deeded acres of the property will not be available to the public. However, Fox said her team will be evaluating ways to provide for more public access in the future and maintain consistency with how they manage their properties.

While Blue Ridge is being evaluated, American Prairie Reserve is proud to offer much of its deeded and leased acres for use by the public for recreation opportunities including hunting, camping, fishing, birding, hiking, cycling, and more. To date, charitable contributions have allowed the Reserve to purchase or lease more than 419,000 acres in Montana's northern plains — one of the four remaining places on Earth where it is possible to conserve and restore temperate grasslands at an ecosystem scale.

“Thanks to the good land stewardship of indigenous peoples and conservation-minded ranchers, it is possible to preserve this ecosystem for the world,” said Fox. “The Blue Ridge acquisition moves us one step closer to achieving our goal of building a refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America’s heritage.”

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About American Prairie Reserve

American Prairie Reserve’s mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America’s heritage. When complete, the Reserve will be part of a landscape encompassing roughly 3 million acres of private and public lands in the region, and it will support all the animals that historically called the Great Plains home, including buffalo, wolves, bears, elk, deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, swift fox, upland birds including the greater sage grouse, birds of prey, and all manner of snakes, amphibians, and insects. Already open to the public for recreation including camping, hunting, fishing, and birding, the Reserve offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime, horizon-expanding opportunity to reconnect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at americanprairie.org